

ABUNDANCE

CHICAGO BEYOND

GRAND VICTORIA FOUNDATION

THE JOHN D. AND CATHERINE T. MACARTHUR FOUNDATION



Abundance is a movement in philanthropy to change practice, policy, mindsets, and ways of being to support Black people and communities, bringing greater freedom to all communities. This document provides context for the Abundance movement, and what it would take to actualize it.

A Call



Almost two years have passed since the social uprisings of 2020. The disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Black communities coupled with the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin set off a litany of statements from philanthropy expressing solidarity with Black communities. These events have led to expanded support of racial equity- and racial justice-focused grantmaking and increased funding to Black-led* organizations, including within our three organizations. They have led to new philanthropic efforts and new philanthropic recognition of longstanding work.

But history shows that responses can be short term, that attention shifts, that structural change requires focus. Will recent efforts lead to structural and sustained change in how philanthropy is in relationship with Black communities and increased investment in Black-led and Black-serving organizations for the long term, uplifting freedom for all communities? Will philanthropic institutions contribute to building Black power in abundance, including by ceding power themselves?

Just as COVID-19 brought anti-Blackness into view for many across healthcare, education, finance, so too in philanthropy. As many grassroots groups have pointed out over decades, philanthropy, as an institution, is complicit in anti-Blackness. It is well-documented that Black-led organizations receive less funding and support from foundations than White-led organizations and their leaders are perceived to be less trustworthy to carry out work in service to Black communities, as Echoing Green and The Bridgespan Group's analyses have highlighted, examining unrestricted net assets in particular because it is often a proxy for trust. Seeing anti-Blackness as a defining element of institutional philanthropic culture brought us to wonder: What would it look like if philanthropy celebrated Black Abundance instead? What would it look like to celebrate the richness of existing Black-led efforts and to support those efforts in a way that leads to freedom and joy for all?

*Leadership self-identifies as Black:

- CEO, Executive Director or other leader self-identifies as Black
- Where there are multiple leaders, 50 percent or more of leadership decision making body self-identifies as Black
- Where the work being supported is a project of or funded by a fiscal sponsor, the leadership of the project/organization self-identifies as Black, and if there are multiple leaders of the fiscally sponsored funded project/organization, 50 percent or more of the leadership self-identifies as Black

It is possible.

We, as funders, can begin to remedy philanthropy's unjust practices, policies and outcomes through our explicit and intentional actions. For example:

- Changing the entry points by which we meet organizations and people to invest in, which shifts our payout to Black-led work.
- Changing traditional criteria and diligence.
- Changing decision making and reframing risk.
- Listening, and funding more fully in response.

Stepping into Abundance in this time is an opportunity to acknowledge and learn. It is an opportunity for collaborative efforts, board engagement, reimagined funder practices—leading to impact for Black people and communities and structural shifts that are generative, generational, and far greater than the sum of their parts.

What is Abundance?



Abundance is an acknowledgement of the richness of existing Black-led efforts and the opportunity to support those efforts in a way that leads to freedom and joy for all.

Abundance is a movement. It is a movement to free mindsets, dollars, policies and practices to address anti-Blackness in philanthropy.

Abundance is a structural shift. It is a demonstration of love for Black people embracing the multitudes of intersectional identities. It is how philanthropy moves resources when we really love Black people as opposed to seeing communities and people as problems to be solved. It is a community of action.

Abundance requires distributing wealth differently and transforming philanthropy's traditional power relationships. The goal is to ensure long term and equitable distribution to Black-led (and centered*) organizations, including those that challenge systems. This is imperative for racial equity and racial justice.

Abundance is the embodiment of we are better together. What would it feel like if philanthropy celebrated and actually invested in Black Lives, Black Resilience, Black Joy, Black Power? Abundance honors timeless truths of Black life. Practicing Abundance yields greater abundance over time—not just for Black communities, but for all.

*Organizations that deliberately design policies, programs and practices in direct response to the experiences of Black individuals, families and communities

Commit to Abundance

1. Set a quantifiable goal to significantly raise annual payout to Black-led work by the start of 2025, with growth year over year, starting now.

- a.* Goals are intended to be transparent, to be significant enough to require that we reexamine mindsets and operating practices, and to demonstrate reparative intent.

- b.* Within foundations, different programs and strategies move differently. This is a commitment to set a high aspiration and to reach for it with accountability. The aim is to challenge ourselves, starting from wherever each institution begins. It is intended to give foundations time to act, so that changes are enduring, significant, and executed with responsibility to communities harmed.

- c.* While anti-Blackness is not limited to the United States, this commitment covers United States funding. Funders with significant work elsewhere may, in addition, apply the mindset of abundance to the specific contexts and culture of their international work, as applicable.

2. Examine culture, policy and practice.

- a. The starting point is noticing: Have aspirations for supporting Black-led work been unconsciously limited or unfulfilled? Do assessments of Black-led and -centered organizations typically result in nominal or no funding?
- b. Examine policy and practices to address barriers faced by Black-led organizations to enter the front doors of philanthropy, and secure significant investment over time.

This may mean:

- Increasing payout above the 5% IRS minimum requirement.
- Examining traditional diligence processes and decision making, for grantmaking and endowments, including who is taking the lead on what to fund and how proximate they are to the issues.
- Establishing longer term trusting relationships with Black leaders, translating to right-sized and unrestricted funding.
- Reframing risk to be centered on risk to all communities rather than perceived risk to foundations.
- Investing in and building Black power and understanding the necessity of ceding power and creating space.
- Building culturally relevant board and staff leadership to support a radical shift in grantmaking.

3. Learn and act, in community.

a. Funders will participate in the Abundance Action Community, which will have a dedicated facilitator and have a shared definition of Black-led work. This will be a space to learn and practice. The Abundance Action Community will strategize collectively, share goals set by each institution, baseline and track year-over-year growth in percentage of annual payout to Black-led work, encourage adaptive changes in practice, and be responsive to Black leaders.

b. In addition, this will mean:

- Participating funders will track percentages of funding to Black-led work and growth over time to demonstrate how operating from Abundance changes their relationships with Black-led efforts.
- Addressing structural opportunities that funders begin to see through increased funding levels.
- Funder staff and boards will experience the joy of operating in the fullness of humanity.

4. Build movement.

- a.* Abundance will shift predominant narrative by celebrating Blackness, which creates joy. The movement will acknowledge and recognize everyday progress and long term impacts.

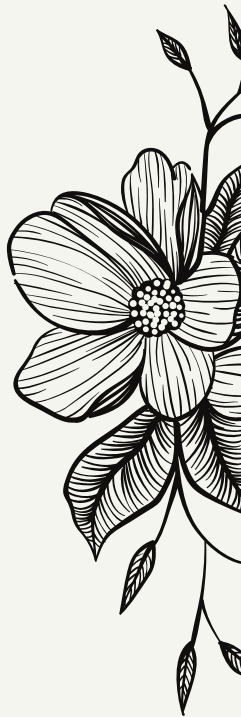
- b.* Individual funders will use their platforms and learnings to uplift the abundance of Black-led work, change the narrative of “risk” inherent to Black bodies, and shine a spotlight on racial equity and racial justice.

- c.* This commitment is meant to encourage field-building in areas where there is limited or no Black leadership and celebrate where there is already Black abundance.

What is Success?

Abundance Seeks to:

- Upend dominant narratives that Black communities are risky and unworthy of more than nominal investment. An array of actions with harmful effects on Black communities are normalized by this narrative.
- Acknowledge that to achieve justice, we must invest in diverse approaches* of Black-led efforts and support and develop many Black leaders—not just one or two perceived to be “exceptional.”
- Expand Black agency and power within institutions through decisions made and informed by Black leaders, including decisions on what to fund and how dollars flow.
- Bring resources to the table not just in this moment, but for the long term, unleashing impact for Black people and communities and greater freedom for all communities.
- Illuminate and invest at scale in work that has been happening for decades that often gets overlooked, yet serves communities in critical ways. This will drive systems change from a different paradigm.
- Reject “either/or”s that reformulate abundance as scarcity. Hierarchies of worth reinforce anti-Blackness just as they reinforce heterosexism, patriarchy, classism, xenophobia, and all forms of colorism, to name a few. Abundance is inherently intersectional. Operating from Abundance uplifts freedom for all communities.
- Stand in joy.



Now is the Time.

Join Us.

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